

MENDOCINO WOODLANDS DEMONSTRATION AREA
(Mendocino Woodlands State Park)
39350 Little Lake Road
Mendocino
Mendocino County
California

HALS CA-29
CA-29

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

MENDOCINO WOODLANDS DEMONSTRATION RECREATION AREA

HALS NO. CA-29

Location: 39350 Little Lake Road, Mendocino, Mendocino County, CA
Lat: 39.18997 Long: -123.42489

Significance: Mendocino Woodlands is the only remaining camp of 46, built in the 1930s by the WPA and CCC during President Roosevelt's administration, that retains its integrity and that has been continuously used as originally intended as a group camp facility and for environmental education. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1997.

Description: Mendocino Woodlands State Park is located in the Jackson State Forest about 8 miles east of Highway One. The park entrance is marked with a traditional wood state park sign with the name etched into wood. There are two buildings at the entry; one is the original care takers home built in the 1930s when the camp was constructed and now occupied by Stephanie Anderson, Park Manager.

Access to the camp, which is divided into 3 separate camp areas, is via a dirt road. The site is long, narrow and steeply sloped. Facilities are built on different levels and are connected via switch-back paths of compacted dirt. Some have simply constructed wooden handrails.

The first building encountered, after passing the National Landmark plaque that is mounted on a Redwood stump, is the dining/recreation room. The kitchen has a high, timber beam ceiling with a skylight and off that central space there are two dining areas each with its own stone fireplace. The Redwood tables and bench seats were constructed by the CCC crews that built the park. From the kitchen double doors lead out onto stone steps and an outdoor eating area. This building and all of the others at the camp were built in the 1930s by the WPA and CCC created by President Roosevelt. All are constructed of old growth redwood milled from the site. They have steel case windows – lots of them that let light in and afford views out into the Redwood forest.

Below the dining building is an amphitheater constructed in a traditional semi-circle with Redwood stumps that mark the corners of the "stage" and the Redwood forest as a "back drop". The theater benches are in two groups divided by wood, timber steps. Each bench is made of Redwood logs topped with a rounded slab of Redwood with the bark removed. There is a 3' diameter fire ring set flush with grade at the center of the amphitheater. This space is used by campers who plan their own entertainment.

This facility was built originally for group camping – it was given to the State of California with the stipulation that it remain in that use. Camping is in individual cabins that are identical throughout. Each has a small (3' x 4') stone porch, space for 4 cots, a small closet, a small porch that is trimmed with specially crafted railings, and a stone fireplace. Cabins are spaced about 30-40 apart and at different levels with dirt footpaths connecting them. Between the paths understory plantings of fern, grasses, blue-eyed grass, Douglas Iris, *Vaccinium ovatum* and *Gaultheria* provide a lush understory.

Each of the camps has identical facilities that include common toilets – showers and a community room / dance hall. At camp 1 the dance floor had been recently replaced and is now a shiny shellacked fir floor.

This camp is heavily used. We visited mid week during the off season and it was very quiet. A school bus arrived with a class of 5th graders who participate in an environmental education program – one of the original concepts established by Roosevelt. The camp manager told us that the camp is being used on weekends now – a group of 125 had departed the day before, and during the peak season they are completely booked.

History: The camp was constructed in the 1930s by the WPA and CCC crews. It was one of 46 similar parks that included Camp David that were built for group camping. “It was conceived to provide a setting that would introduce the public to the wonders of nature” according to the Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association website history. This is the only one of the original camps that has maintained its integrity and been continuously used for its original purpose. It was given to the people of California with the mandate that it be used for group camping and environmental education. A non-profit group was organized in 1949 to manage the park and in 1976 Mendocino Woodlands became a State Park. National Historic Landmark status was granted in 1997.

Originally the camp was 5424 acres but it was reduced in 1976 to 700 acres with a Special Treatment Area around it to provide a buffer that is operated by the California Department of Forestry.

Sources: Mendocino Woodlands Camp Association website.
<http://www.mendocinowoodlands.org/>

Site visits and interview with Stephanie Anderson, Park Manager on May 26, 2009.

Historian: Chris Pattillo, Landscape Architect, June 6, 2009
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Typical Redwood cabin nestled in the second growth forest. Stone fireplace and stone front porch on the left. Casement window on facing wall. Another cabin can be seen in the background. Typical dirt path leading to the cabin with lush understory plants between paths (Chris Pattillo, May 26, 2009).



Amphitheater at camp one. Redwood benches and timbers define semi-circular space (Chris Pattillo, May 26, 2009).